Last August, the Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) ratified the STAC Charter. As a subsidiary group of the Information Sharing Council (ISC), the STAC was established to support ISC duties pertaining to the sharing of national security, public safety and terrorism information among SBU environments. The STAC mission is to promote and advance responsible sharing of timely, accurate, and comprehensive SBU information by federal, state, local, and tribal partner agencies and stakeholders across the full spectrum and scope of their respective missions, under their own authorities, to achieve mission effectiveness.

Since then, a concept of operations (CONOP) document that articulates the common operating policies, processes and procedures for a National Interoperable SBU Federation (the Federation) was written by STAC members and finalized on November 15, 2016.

The CONOPS is not a document chock full of technical jargon, rather, it accurately, briefly and concisely outlines the operating concepts necessary to connect the entire SBU landscape to drive successful implementation of SBU information sharing in: Access, Discovery/Search, and Shared Services and recommends that three operating principles form the basis of ongoing Federation activity.

Moving forward, the Federation will use a common set of references and data should be available to Federation users without unnecessary restriction while responsibility for access rules continues to lie with data owners. Trust among Federation participants will be assured through the use of digital assertions. An Assertion-Based Architecture (ABA) is a technical framework that enables the wide-scale use of digital assertions to convey trusted statements (assertions) about the compliance of ISE participants with rules derived from the external sources.

All parties recognize that this CONOPS is only the first step and that further details will be worked out at regular, bi-weekly STAC meetings, technical exchange meetings and other fora, then documented and published.